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FLOOR DEBATE

February 25, 2002 LR 6, 292

from gambling in Iowa was \$206 million. And probably a little short of half of that was coming in from the casinos and the racetrack on the western border. You can see the number of employees, 10,000 employees. I don't know what their mix is of Iowa and Nebraska employees over there right now. I know they have some Nebraska employees. But I would venture to say if the casinos were on our side of the river versus those, there would be a lot more Nebraska people employed. Casino employee wages in Iowa, \$257 million. And you should talk to the construction people in the state. You know, at this time, when there is some impetus needed for our economy, it certainly would be nice to have the construction associated with three or four or five casinos. Listen to what the Mayor of Council Bluffs says about how bad gambling is: The economic impact to our community from the gaming industry has been profound. Pretty strong word. Every economic indicator, every economic indicator has soared since gaming started here. Prior to the riverboat casinos, Council Bluffs always was in the shadow of Omaha. That has changed. Now we have over eight million visitors a year coming here to shop, stay, and play. And a huge percentage of those visitors are from our state. There is one market here. There are a certain number of people in that market. We're not trying to expand the market. We're trying to capture our share of that market. And that's why, to me, some of the things that Senator Jensen mentions, which I would acknowledge are true if in fact you were starting casino gambling in a state, they simply don't...they sound hollow to me. They don't ring true because...because how are you going to have more problems? How is HHS going to have more problems if the market over here is already saturated and Nebraskans are already gambling? We already have those problems. We already have those problems. It doesn't matter whether the casinos are on this side of the river or the other side of the river, the market is in a particular area, a large part of it isn't in Nebraska, and the HHS problems associated with casino gambling are already here and would be unchanged by LR 292. Yes, it's a tax on poor people. It's not something I would choose to do, all things being equal.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: One minute.